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THE TALMUD :

ITS RELATION TO JUDAISM,

AND

THE ATTITUDE OF THE JEWS TOWARDS SOCIETY.

BY

RABBI SAMSON R. PHAEL HIRSCH.

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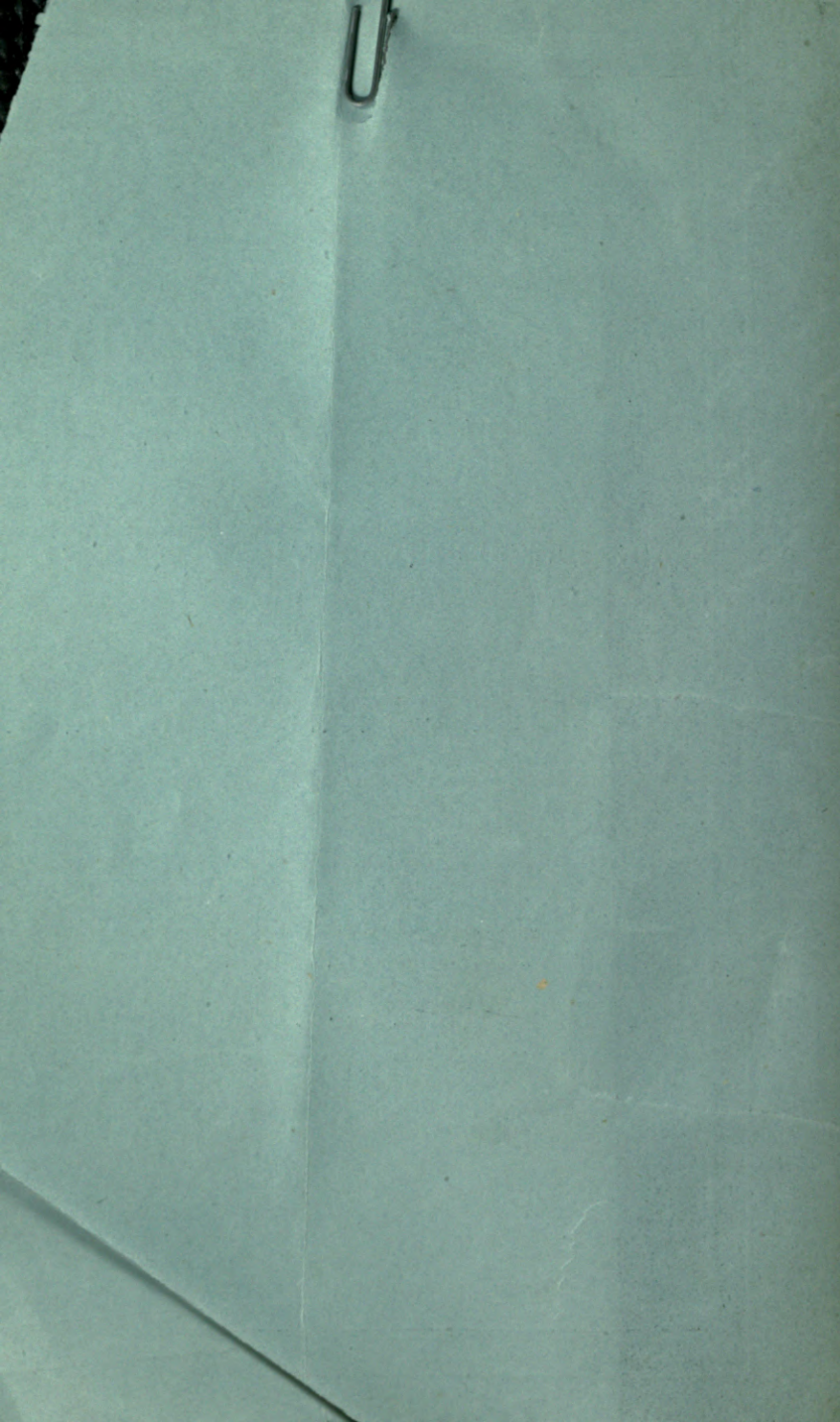
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The Talmud :

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PREFACE.

Certain of my friends have suggested that I should write a short and popular account of the relationship of the Talmud to Judaism and the social attitude of the Jews. The century to which we are accustomed to assign the palm for enlightened humanity and general regard for law and right, seems, unhappily, not likely to come to an end without inflicting on the sincere lover of his kind the sharp pain of a complete disillusion. Truths which we long ago thought firmly established as the mental property of mankind, are once more called in question, and prejudices which we thought dead and buried are celebrating their resurrection in terrible fashion. And the Jews in especial are sufferers by this retrogression in knowledge and culture. Anti-Jewish agitators are striving to recommend as a subject for regulation and consideration to governments and councils that so-called "Jewish Question" which we imagined to be settled long ago, and the very possibility of the ægis of inviolable legal equality failing the Jew, causes the lower passions of hatred and ill-will to find fresh nourishment in the breasts of nations long accustomed to look upon the Jew as an equal-privileged fellow-citizen, whose honest diligence and useful industry, as well as his purse ever open to the calls of charity, had acquired for him the recognition and good-will of his fellow-countrymen.

From the very beginning the Talmud has always suffered with the Jew, and the prejudice which attacked the Jew attacked in special fashion the Talmud also—nay, ignorance has always shown itself ready to fasten on the Talmud as the cause of the mischievous conduct of which it was alleged the Jew was guilty.

Thus even people otherwise well disposed, but to whom no means of correcting an erroneous view on such a subject are accessible, are found giving countenance to the opinion that a repudiation of the Talmud, which they regard as no intrinsic or original part of Judaism, is most earnestly to be desired, as well in the interest of the Jews themselves as in that of the population in whose midst they live; and they hail approvingly as a symptom of modern progress the gradual emancipation of their Jewish contemporaries from the Talmud.

These considerations, drawn from everyday experience, have induced me to listen to the above-mentioned suggestion of my friends, and by furnishing extracts from the Talmudic writings in scrupulously exact renderings to enable every non-Jewish and impartial reader to form a correct judgment as to the influence of the Talmud upon its upholders.

This task I have willingly undertaken, and in the following pages I have striven to acquit myself of it to the best of my powers. Wherever the opportunity presented itself I have chosen for extract such maxims as have become verbally incorporate in the national consciousness, and thereby exercised the most immediate influence on the formation of Jewish sentiments and principles. May these unpretending pages serve as a source of better information to all who care to exchange prejudice for truth; may they be thought worthy of attention particularly by all those who, by their position and activity are bound to exercise an influence on their Jewish fellow-citizens, and may the time be not too far distant which, by recognition of the true and reverence of the right, shall bring to all the social relationship of mankind the hopeful fulfilment of all good men's desires for the general welfare.

I.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TALMUD ON JUDAISM AND ON THE SOCIAL ATTITUDE OF THE JEWS.

Hardly can it be said of any other literary work that it has directed and sustained the spiritual, moral, and social development of a whole nation through all the centuries between the earliest period of its historical existence and the living present, as may be affirmed of the Talmud. Long before the commencement of the third century of the Christian era (at which time the reduction of the Talmud to writing was begun) its contents were operative as oral tradition and teaching in the hearts and minds of the nation, as is testified by the writings of a Josephus and a Philo, and even by the religion of the Christians themselves. The Talmud contains in reality nothing but the formal setting forth in writing of the orally current explanations, interpretations, definitions and corollaries of the Law formulated in pregnant curtness in the written word of the Bible. The germs of these traditions date from the time of Moses, who committed them to the memory of his people in the forty years of their wanderings as being of equally divine origin with the written word and of like importance for their instruction. These oral interpretations were from the outset presupposed in the writing down of the Law, which absolutely required them for its due observance. An attentive reader of the Bible will even discover that the whole Law was at first delivered orally and was thus already fully known to the people when Moses, before his departure, reduced it to writing. The very reading of the Bible in its original character requires the knowledge of tradition. To the present day our scrolls of the Law have neither vowels, nor accents, nor divisions into verses, which all three are demonstrably the inventions of later times, and are also intended merely to fix in writing

the traditional method of reading. Thus the simple reading of the Bible-character rests on traditions handed down by the very generations and men who also handed down the interpretations contained in the Talmud; and as the Christian church honours the Jewish Bible as the source of its faith, this, in so far as it rests on the word of the Bible, is built on a basis of Talmudic tradition. This is what Hillel pointed out to a heathen who wished to be admitted to membership in the Jewish community by accepting the written Law while rejecting the unwritten. Hillel showed him that he himself, for the mere reading of the written Law, was obliged to rely entirely upon tradition. So necessary for the carrying out in practice of the written Law, and so presupposed by it, is tradition, that those very sects which, in the course of time, arose within the pale of Judaism and rejected the Talmudic tradition found themselves obliged to set up a tradition of their own. And they all have also vanished in the course of time, with the survival of only a small section of the Karaites. The only Judaism of historic import which has held its God-appointed way through the centuries and through the nations, is Talmudic Judaism—the Judaism nourished, sustained and preserved by Talmudic tradition.

In addition to traditions which go back to the time of Moses, the Talmud also contains judicial and instructive utterances, decisions and illustrations of later teachers and sages, which, as consequences, applications or interpretations, are deduced from or added to those traditions, and are invested with an equal authority. These form the Halacha, or the Halachic part of the Talmud. Then there are individual views, proverbs, parables, &c., with no claim to binding authority; and these form the Haggadah, or Haggadistic part of the Talmud.

The Talmud consists of two works, of which the older one—the Mishna—contains the traditions current at the time of its reduction to writing in aphorisms of close-packed sententiousness, the interpretations of which, however, remained traditional and oral. Some 250 years later these interpreting traditions were also reduced to writing in a work called the Gemara. This Gemara, a voluminous work, is in form unique in literature. It consists of almost verbally-reported discussions which took place in the schools. It therefore records opposing opinions, and only the results finally arrived at are valid for practical guidance, and these are systematically arranged and classified into codes.

From this slight sketch it will easily be seen that the Talmud is no mere supplement to Judaism which might be rejected without thereby affecting the character of Judaism, but is rather the one source from which Judaism has flowed, the basis upon which Judaism is built—the very soul which informs and sustains Judaism. In fact Judaism, as embodied in the historic phenomenon of the Jewish race, and as manifested in its mental and moral capacities and virtues, which not even the enemies of Judaism can deny, Judaism is wholly and solely an outcome of Talmudic teaching and of the system of education and culture followed and fostered by it.

As distinctly Jewish characteristics may be mentioned the following: Conscientious conduct through all the changes of time and destiny; patience and trustful endurance in the most acute and trying

sufferings; self-sacrificing power of truth to conviction, which makes the Jews capable of being bent but not broken, of preferring death to apostacy; the sense of duty, obedience and loyalty to sovereign and government; benevolence and beneficence towards fellow-citizens, prompt and active at all times and without regard to the greater or lesser degree of benevolence, justice and humanity, or their opposites, with which they are treated by those fellow-citizens, so that although the Jews have at all times been the victims of cruelty and ill-treatment they have never allowed themselves to be provoked into reprisals in kind, but in all political tempests have always taken a firm stand on the side of government; interest in everything intellectual, and the intellectual gifts which have always distinguished individuals of the Jewish nation, who, with no advantage from State guardianship, but in the teeth of most utter and contemptuous neglect by those in authority have found for themselves and drawn from their own resources such sufficient mental culture as to place the Jewish nation, when once the favour of recent times allowed it to emerge from the enforced seclusion of the past, most unexpectedly on a spiritual level with its hitherto more favoured contemporaries; the personal virtues of temperance, diligence, philanthropy and thrift, combined with open-handedness, wherever the ends of humanity, public welfare, and education are to be served; the moral virtues, for to this day Jewish names are rarities in the lists of serious transgressions against life, chastity, and property; the virtues of domestic life, the kindly relations which subsist between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters; the manner in which the community is able to count upon the liberality of its members, and the disinterested character of its administrators—all these average peculiarities of the Jewish character, which are surely no disgrace to it, and which are so strongly marked that the bitterest enemies are forced to admit their existence, are the work of the Talmud; so much so that with the greater or less neglect of the Talmud, in these later days there is a perceptible falling off in the strength of some of these peculiarities. The Talmud, moreover, by its liturgic forms and its daily use has made the common life of the Jews one continued reminder of and educator in the fear of God. In every enjoyment, in every observed process of nature, in every joyful or sorrowful event of his life, it bids the Jew look up to God, whose hand he is thus accustomed to see, and to honour Him in nature, life and destiny. Nay, the whole doctrine of the incorporeality and immortality of the soul, the doctrine of a future existence, and the ultimate righteous reward of a life of performed or neglected duty—these doctrines, which afford such an essential support to religious consciousness and patient fulfilment of duty, are in the written word only hinted at, having been received for oral transmission in the Talmud.

And while in opposition to all this the allegation of the mischievousness of the Talmud is being widely disseminated by enemies and opponents of Jews and Judaism, and finds acceptance even among the well-disposed, who are not in a position to enquire for themselves into the truth or falsehood of the accusation; while it is alleged that the Talmud encourages cunning and subtlety, allows deception, theft, and all unrighteousness in dealing with non-Jews, makes the Jew shy

of work, sets its face against labour, handicraft and agriculture, and is to blame for the Jew's exclusive devotion to commerce; it is demonstrable that the direct reverse of all this is the real truth, and that all these allegations are but the offspring of hatred, delusion, ignorance, unconscious understanding or deliberate misrepresentation.

In a time which has witnessed the prominent reappearance of the so-called Jewish question in the arena of public discussion, it cannot be a matter of indifference, seeing the undeniably close connection existing between the Talmud and the whole intellectual and moral, social and individual life of the Jews—it cannot be a matter of indifference what view of the Talmud is held by those who, from their position or intellectual eminence, are called to exercise an influence on the nation's sense of truth and justice and through these on the thereon dependent destinies of the adherents of Judaism. At least it may well appear desirable by the accurate quotation of passages from the Talmud and its practical commentaries to furnish the proofs of the extreme value of the Talmud as the whole source of true Judaism, and at the same time in opposition to the allegations of its pernicious character to demonstrate the tendency of the teaching of the Talmud to promote and secure the general well-being and good conduct of the Jews.

We will begin with the latter point—the rebutting of the false accusation against the Talmud, and the establishment of the contrary facts.

As to Honesty. The Talmud informs us that when we appear before the great Judge to give an account of our lives the first question asked will be: "Hast thou been upright in all thy goings and doings?"¹ Let thy yea be yea, and thy nay be nay. Let not thy thoughts gainsay thy words. Even though the bargain be not legally or formally concluded on thy part, thou shalt know that the same God will punish the man who departs from his word, who once punished the generations of the Flood and of the Tower of Babel. Merely to depart from the spoken word is a breach of honesty.² Nay, he is approved who is true to his *unuttered thought*, like one of the wise men of the Talmud, to whom a purchaser made an offer while he, the vendor, was occupied, with something else and was therefore unable to answer him, whereupon the purchaser, thinking he had made too small an offer, increased it. The vendor, however, having dispatched his other business, accepted the first-named low price for his goods, because he said he had already in thought resolved to do so before the higher bid was made.³

It is forbidden to cheat any man—Jew or Gentile—in buying or selling, or to mislead him by words, or even to conceal from him any known defect in the goods. It is equally forbidden to give a deceptive appearance to goods or to diminish their value by adulteration.⁴

All, even the most trifling, theft, robbery, or withholding of what belongs to others, whether Jew, Gentile, or idolatrous heathen, is forbidden. Nothing may be stolen even in jest or with an intention of restoration either immediate or ultimate. The mere temporary use of an article without the knowledge of the owner is robbery.⁵

¹ Sabbath, 31 a.

² Baba Mezia, 49 a.

³ Makkoth, 24 a.

⁴ Maimonides, On Selling, ch. 18.

⁵ Maimonides, On Theft, &c., ch. 1.

Goods supposed to be stolen must not be bought, nor anything from a known thief.¹ If any man at a feast or in the house of mourning has an article of clothing changed he must not use the one left to him.² The avoidance of State dues or taxes is no less than robbery.³ It is not allowed to take even a straw from a truss or a twig from the hedge to make a toothpick; for, it is added, if every man took them, there would be an end of the one man's truss of straw and of the other man's hedge.⁴

Much which does not come properly within the definition of theft or robbery is forbidden by the rabbinical regulations which proceed from the maxim to avoid everything which resembles or might lead to wrongdoing—a maxim which they have extended over the whole field of the religious law, and which is exemplified in the saying that a Nazarite who has vowed to abstain from the taste of wine or grapes should be admonished to make a *circuit* so as to avoid even the neighbourhood of a vineyard.⁵ These safeguards against wrongdoing are called *fences of the Law*. For similar reasons several kinds of gaming and betting are forbidden (the professional gambler is declared incapable of giving legal testimony), and the Jews are instructed not to fly pigeons so close to those of their neighbours as to tempt strange pigeons into their traps or pigeon houses.⁶

The Talmud recognises not only the theft of goods but also a theft of opinion and esteem,⁷ as when one causes another to have a better opinion of him than he is really entitled to by his conduct, even when no prejudice thereby arises to the other. It is said expressly that we are not to steal men's good opinion or esteem—not even the Gentile's; and as a warning it is told how one of the Doctors of the Talmud seriously reprimanded his servant for having given to a Gentile ferryman as *kosher*, or perfect, a fowl which was really *treifa*, or not fit for use by Jews according to their law, although the imperfection was of no importance to the Gentile ferryman and the fowl was perfectly fit for his use. Into the same category fall all unmerited *captatio benevolentiae*, e.g., pressing invitations, overloading with presents when one knows that they will not be accepted, &c.

Particular stress is laid upon the observance of the commands about just weights and measures contained in Lev. xix. 35, 36, and Deut. xxv. 13-15, and the most minute and elaborate directions are given for the maintenance of correctness in weights and measures and for the avoidance of errors in weighing, measuring and counting.⁸ The Talmud warns us⁹ that the penalty for using false weights and measures is heavier than for sexual frailties, which are sins against God alone, while the use of false weights and measures is an offence against man also. The one offence can be atoned for by honest repentance, while in the other case a perfect atonement is usually impossible, as it would require in the first place a restitution of the wrongful gain to be made, whereas it is generally impossible to tell to

¹ Baba Kama, 119 b.

² B. Bathra, 46 a.

³ B. Kama, 113 a; Maimonides, On Theft, ch. 5, 11.

⁴ Ch. M. 359, 1.

⁵ Chulin, 44 b; Sabbath, 13 a; Pessachim, 40 b, &c.

⁶ Sanhedrin, 24 b.

⁷ Chulin, 84 a, b.

⁸ B. Bathra, 88, a; Maimon., Theft, ch. 7 and 8.

⁹ B. Bathra, 88 a; Maimon., Theft, 7, 12.

what extent and to whom wrong has been done by false weights and measures. Here again it is expressly repeated that it matters not that we are dealing with a Gentile or an idolater—whoever gives a short measure or weight breaks a commandment and must make it good¹; similarly we are not to cheat a Gentile in reckoning—whoever does it comes under the text Deut. xxv. 16, "For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God."

The Talmud is also very explicit as to the conscientious discharge of obligations contracted by debtors, guardians, hired workmen, &c. From its rich store of material we extract a few sentences. The payment of debts is not only a legal obligation, but also a religious duty,² and unpunctuality is severely censured in him who is able to pay.³ The man who borrows £100 and repays it by instalments pays indeed—but his creditor is entitled to be angry.⁴ Borrowed money must be so employed that the lender shall not lose it in the end. Thy neighbour's profit shall be as dear to thee as thy own.⁵ Goods left in trust must not be used even temporarily—such using entails the same consequences as theft.⁶ The same consequences ensue in some cases where such use has merely been begun and not completed.⁷

Even as the employer is bound not to unjustly deprive his labourer of anything, the labourer is bound to give his whole time and ability to his master's service. He may not work for him by night and hire himself out to another by day; nor may he refrain from taking proper food and pass it to his children, for by so doing he diminishes the strength which he has let to his employer and his own turnout of work. He must also make full use of the time for which he is hired, and not waste it in repeated idling⁸; nay, he may not interrupt his labour even to rise when some one passes by to whom he is otherwise bound to pay reverence.⁹

As to gaining a livelihood, the Talmud puts a high value upon an independent life, which dispenses with all charitable assistance, and teaches that this end should be sought by every possible honest means, that for its attainment we should be ashamed of no labour or work, and that we should bear with the greatest privations, if by so doing we may dispense with the assistance of others. In the Talmudic circle labour was held sacred. The principle acted on was—"Labour is a grand thing, for it honours man."¹⁰ Strip the skin from a dead beast in the street and earn something, and say not "I am a priest or a great man, and it beseems me not."¹¹ Live on the Sabbath as on week-days, but ask not for relief.¹² Hire thyself to a work that otherwise fits thee not, and keep thyself free of man's help.¹³ The Talmudic doctors esteemed their learning too highly, as they said, to make a spade of it and dig therewith¹⁴; they imparted it gratuitously and supported themselves mainly by labour, handicraft, agriculture or simple commerce. As we find these various occupa-

¹ Maimon., Theft, 8. ² Arachin, 22 a. ³ B. Mezia, 3 a.

⁴ B. Mezia, 77 b. ⁵ Maimon., Loans, 1, 3; Aboth, 2, 17.

⁶ B. Mezia, 43 a, b. ⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Maim., On Wages, end of Ch. M. 337, 19, 20. ⁹ J. D., 244, 5.

¹⁰ Nedarim, 49 b. ¹¹ Pesachim, 113 a. ¹² Ib., 112 a.

¹³ B. Bathra, 110 a. ¹⁴ Aboth, 4, 7.

tions followed by them, we are not astonished to find them teaching that as the father is bound to instruct his son in the law of religion, he is also bound to have him taught a trade.¹ According to one interpretation, every lawful calling was on a footing of equality with a trade. Others maintained that it was necessary to learn a handicraft, even though the man intended to follow some other profession, for a handicraft alone was always sure of earning him a living.² A man should always teach his son a trade having as few temptations to wrongdoing as may be, and offering him some leisure for intellectual cultivation.³ He shall not put him to a trade which will bring him much in contact with women. Handicrafts are particularly approved. Handicrafts there will always be in the world; happy is he who has a good trade in his hands!⁴ Though the famine endure for seven years, yet will it not find the door of the craftsman.⁵ Love work, and desire not to be highly placed.⁶ The God-fearing man who lives by the work of his hands is doubly blessed; he is happy both in this world and in the next.⁷

Agriculture also was held in high esteem. Many indeed preferred commerce, and one Rabbi passing by a cornfield whose full ears seemed to nod and beckon to him, said jestingly, "Beckon as much as you like, it is better to have to do with trade than with you!"⁸ But the general verdict contradicted this. A man—so we are told—who possesses no field is no man, for it is written: The earth hath He given to the children of men. Sow thine own fruit and buy it not; though both cost thee alike dear, yet is that which thou hast sown thyself more blessed.⁹ When it is said (Deut. xxviii. 66), "And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee," it is intended to apply to those who *buy* their supply of corn *from year to year*; "thou shalt fear day and night," applies to those who buy it *from week to week*; "and shalt have none assurance of thy life," is said of him who relies on the breadseller.¹⁰ "He that tilleth (literally, *serveth*) his land shall be satisfied with bread" (Prov. xii. 11). Only when a man works like a *servant* on his land shall he be satisfied with bread—not otherwise.¹¹ From all these maxims it is evident that the Talmud strongly desires and recommends that every man shall have and till his own land, raising the crops he requires by his own cultivation. According to the agrarian ideas of that time it was considered a particularly blessed holding of land which consisted of corn land, olives, and vines in equal extents.¹² We read¹³ that when God bade Abraham emigrate into a land which he and his seed should possess, and he saw the people of Mesopotamia eating and drinking, and idling and making merry, he said: "God grant that my lot may not be cast in this land!" But when he came to the Tyrian slopes on the borders of Palestine and saw the folks busy with weeds in the weed-time and with ploughing in its due season, he said: "God grant that my lot be cast in this land!" In these words appears the consciousness that the agricultural life with its regularly recurring

¹ Kiddushin, 30 b.² Ibid.³ Kiddushin, 82 a.⁴ Ibid.⁵ Sanhedrin, 29 a.⁶ Aboth, 2, 10.⁷ Berachot, 8 a.⁸ Jebamoth, 63 a.⁹ Ibid.¹⁰ Menachoth, 103 b.¹¹ Sanhedrin, 58 b.¹² B. Mezia, 107 a.¹³ M. Rabba on Gen. xii. 1.

seasons is favourable to the development of man's nature. The whole religious legislation of the Jews presupposes agriculture as its first condition, and every one of the Jewish festivals is in direct connection with field labour and agriculture. The tribe most celebrated for intellectual culture—Issachar—was a tribe of agriculturists, and "every man under his own vine and fig-tree" was the Jewish ideal of national prosperity.¹ And this continued even after the Jewish nation had been driven out of its own country to dwell among strangers.

A glance into the comprehensive treatise of Seraïm, which treats of the religious prescriptions relating to agriculture, or into the civil law treatises *Baba Kama*, *Mezia*, and *Bathra*, which incidentally touch upon agricultural topics, will show how extensive and minute was the knowledge possessed by the Talmudic doctors of the peculiarities of the various crops and of their different management and treatment according to the conditions of the soil and locality, &c.; in short, what a thoroughgoing knowledge the Talmudic sages had of a rational agriculture and arboriculture—a knowledge only to be gained by a serious practice of husbandry by themselves. A glance into the above-mentioned treatises will serve to show also that the opinions there expressed as to the value of agriculture influenced their own practice. To such an extent did they rely upon their husbandry for their subsistence, that one master of the rabbinical lore saw occasion to request his numerous hearers not to frequent his lecture room in spring and autumn, so as to be able at those seasons to devote their undivided attention to their fields and not to be troubled about their subsistence during the rest of the year.² Commerce and manufactures were indeed practised in the Talmudic time—they are both as indispensable as husbandry—the very husbandman himself has need of them. What can he do with his crops unless the merchant relieves him of the produce of his labour and disposes of it elsewhere?—a combination which the Bible exhibits in the fraternal and complementary alliance of the land cultivation of the intellectual tribe of Issachar with the commercial tribe of Zebulun.³ Still, the wise men of the Talmud were not favourable to a too extensive commerce or a too great devotion to trade. There was no blessing, they opined, on the profit from across the sea.⁴ And whereas the husbandman at the end of his day's work and in the winter season always has some leisure for self-cultivation, they found by experience, that with merchants and traders mental culture usually comes to an early end⁵; that he who is too much of a business man is usually no sage.⁶ They therefore advised their brethren to restrict themselves in business and contrive to gain time for mental culture.⁷

Increase of knowledge was consistent only with limited attention to business.⁸ We have already stated that they did not make merchandise of their learning, and were therefore obliged to earn their living by some trade or occupation; and they therefore also said: "Beautiful is the study of the Law with a breadwinner, but the study of the Law not joined with labour endures not."⁹

¹ Micah iv. 4.² Berachot, 35 b.³ Deut. xxxiii. 18.⁴ Pesachim, 50 b.⁵ Eruvin, 55 a.⁶ Aboth, 2, 6.⁷ Aboth, 4, 12.⁸ Aboth, 6, 6.⁹ Aboth, 2, 2.

The above quotations from the Talmud—and they could easily be multiplied if it were necessary—suffice to show how erroneous is the opinion that the Talmud is hostile to labour and particularly adverse to agriculture. If in the more recent centuries of his sojourn in European countries the Jew has turned away from husbandry and given himself ever more and more to commerce, the fault is not in the Talmud, nor yet in the Jew's distaste or incapacity for husbandry, but is due wholly to the disfavour shown him by the various States and nationalities, who have either absolutely prohibited him from owning and cultivating the soil or have hampered him with endless restrictions.

And again, so long as the Jew was not entitled to the same legal status and protection as his fellow-citizens, so long as he was liable to be driven from house and home by Governmental tyranny or the unfettered passions of a fanatical populace, so long was it impossible for him to devote himself to the cultivation of the soil, a business which, more than any other, requires a completely secure legal position. He was obliged to practise such means of livelihood and cultivate such capacities as were capable of being easily carried away, and of being everywhere available for the maintenance of those depending upon him. Let the Jew be made free and equal, and have time given to grow familiar with an occupation to which—unless we are much deceived—a man must be accustomed by habit and practice from his youth up, and the Jew will return with hereditary affection to a mode of life which was part of his original destiny.

II.

RELATION TO GOVERNMENT AND FELLOW-CITIZENS.

With three oaths, says the Talmud, God sent Israel into exile. He made Israel swear never to attempt to return to the Promised Land, but to abide patiently until God should lead him back. He made Israel swear never to rise in rebellion against the States into which he should be adopted. And He adjured the nations that they should not oppress Israel beyond measure.¹

Its two oaths the Jewish nation has kept through all the long centuries of its exile; never has it sought in self-will to return, and never, nor in any place, has it rebelled against the government of any land wherein it has found shelter. The same Talmud which inserted in our daily prayers as integral parts of Jewish conviction, confidence in an ultimate return to the land of our fathers, in the rebuilding of the Temple and the complete fulfilment of the divine law on its native soil of the Promised land, simultaneously with the appearance on earth of the kingdom of God with its eternal peace, the assembling together of all mankind for the acknowledgment and worship of God—the Only One—by a life of truth, righteousness and love; the same Talmud which implants and encourages these hopes and expectations pronounces every unauthorised attempt to hasten that return to be criminal insubordination to the will of God. It remits the fulfilment of

¹ Kethuboth, 111 a.

these promises wholly to the time of God's call for our reassembling. It bids us until then wait patiently in the land of His appointment, to love it as our country, to promote its welfare, and towards its prince, government and inhabitants to fulfil all the duties of loyal subjects and citizens, as was commanded in the case of Babylon (Jer. xxix. 1-7).

For this reason the Jews have always and everywhere approved themselves as the most loyal of subjects. "The law of government is law"—so runs the short formula which the Talmud sets before us as a guiding principle, meaning that whatever a government imposes as law on its subjects has for us an inviolable validity and must be conscientiously observed by us.¹ On this principle the Talmud, as already mentioned, teaches that the evasion of lawfully due taxes is to be considered as theft, and it is expressly stated in the legal code (Ch. M., 369, 6) that the same rule applies to taxes levied only on Jews. Rabbi Nissim² explains this rule thus: The land belongs to the ruler and the permission to settle in it accorded to the Jew is granted only on condition that he will faithfully obey the laws of that land. Never forget the respect due to the government.³ There is nothing more glorious in might on earth than a king.⁴ A servant having his king's commission is as the king himself.⁵ A government makes its word a fact. Does it say it will remove mountains, so it doth, and takes not back the word it spake.⁶

Pray for the welfare of the government, for but for its dreaded power society would dissolve in a war of all against all.⁷ Every governor, every petty official even, thou shalt regard as appointed by heaven, for in his proper circle he has to maintain law and order.⁸ Therefore our public liturgy contains a prayer for sovereign and government, and the Talmud teaches us upon seeing a king to repeat the benediction: "Blessed be God who to mortal man giveth of His glory."⁹

We have already shown under the head of Honesty that according to the teaching of the Talmud the obligation of uprightness towards all men is without the exception even of heathen or idolater, and that every departure from the right—every wrong done, no matter to whom, in buying or selling, every deception and fraud in measure, weight, tale or computation—is hateful to God. But not merely are the obligations of honesty towards all men inculcated by the Talmud, but it enjoins us also to relieve their poor, to tend their sick, to bury their dead,¹⁰ to give reverent assistance to their old men,¹¹ to greet such of them as are eminent for worldly learning with the benediction of the God who giveth wisdom to mortal men,¹² and all this though they be heathens or idolaters. Non-Jews, however, who recognise the Lord of heaven and earth of the Bible, and confess themselves bound to the fulfilment of all human duties, to refrain from murder, theft, unchastity, &c., these, according to the teaching of the Talmud, stand, so far as the duties between man and man are concerned, on a footing of perfect equality with the Jews, and are entitled not merely to upright dealing at our hands, but also to the display of active

¹ B. Kama, 113 a.⁴ Gittin, 56 a.⁷ Aboth, 3, 2.¹⁰ Gittin, 61 a.² Nedarim, 28 a.⁵ B. Kama, 136 b.⁸ Berachot, 58 a.¹¹ Kiddushin, 33 a.³ Sebachim, 102 a.⁶ B. Bathra, 3 t.⁹ Berachot, 58 a.¹² Berachot, 55 a.

philanthropy.¹ The Talmudic sages are the only teachers who do not say, "no salvation outside of our creed!" They rather teach that the just of all nations have a share in the everlasting blessedness.²

The Mosaic Law, according to the Talmud, is of everlasting validity, but only for the Jews. The rest of mankind is fully justified before God by the conscientious observance of the common, seven so-called Noachic duties. Hence the Talmudic gloss on Lev. xviii. 5 (Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them), "Even a Gentile who fulfils the Law of God, which is given to him, stands equal with the high priest, for it is written: Which if a man do, he shall live in them."

In the same way, in Isaiah xxvi. 2, it is not written: "Open ye the gates that *Israel and the priests* may enter in," but "that *the righteous nation which keepeth the truth* may enter in." Again in Psalm cxviii. 20, it is not: "This is the gate of the Lord, into which *priests, Levites and Israel* shall enter," but "into which the *righteous* shall enter." Again in Psalm xxxiii. 1, we read, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye *righteous!*" not "O ye *priests, Levites and Israel!*" And lastly, in Psalm cxxv. 4, it is written—"Do good, O Lord, unto *those that be good,*" not "unto the *priests, Levites and Israel.*" From all this it follows that even a Gentile who fulfils the Law that is given to him stands on an equality with the high priest himself.³ These utterances promise life, nearness to God, happiness, and salvation to every man who fulfils his obligations before God in deed and in truth. One of the Talmudic doctors says explicitly:—"I call heaven and earth to witness that, whether it be Gentile or Jew, man or woman, man-servant or maidservant, according to his works, even so shall the holy spirit rest on him."⁴

On the ground and in the spirit of these Talmudic doctrines have the rabbis of all ages instructed their brethren as to what their Jewish obligations required of them in the way of conduct towards the rulers and peoples under whose protection and among whom they live. With special earnestness and insistence have they pointed out that the nations among whom the Jews now live, however they may vary from the views and mode of life of the Jews, do nevertheless accept and reverence the Jewish Bible, as a book of divine revelation, and acknowledge in their creeds and moral codes the God of heaven and earth taught by the Bible, and His ruling providence in this life and in that which is to come—which acknowledgment lays them under the obligation of the general duties of humanity and altogether differentiates them from the heathen and idolatrous peoples of the Talmudic time, towards whom the Talmud commands the performance of all legal duties (though not necessarily the full display of active philanthropy), and places them in the category of the non-Jews, whom, in the matter of active philanthropy, the Talmud places on a footing of perfect equality with Jews. Our teachers, also, earnestly and with insistence point out that we owe a particular debt of gratitude even now to the princes and nations who have given us shelter and protection, for even of the Egyptian, in whose land we suffered

¹ Maimon., Melachim, 10, 12.

² Sifra on Lev. xviii. 5.

³ Sanhedrin, 105 a.

⁴ Tana debe Elia on Judges iv. 4.

the most oppressive slavery, Holy Scripture commands, "Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land" (Deut. xxiii. 7).

Towards the close of the last century celebrated Rabbis like R. Ezekiel Landau, R. Eliezer Fleckeles and R. Jacob Emden treated this subject exhaustively in their various works. The Talmud, according to a commentary on Aboth iv. 11, laid particular stress on the way in which *Christians and Mohammedans* are to be regarded by us as instruments for the ultimate universalisation of the knowledge of God over the whole earth. Whereas the nations who preceded them worshipped idols, denied the existence of God and acknowledged neither God's power nor a future retribution, the existence of Christianity and Mohammedanism has served to spread abroad the knowledge of God, and to open up the most remote lands to the idea that there is a God who rules the world, distributes rewards and penalties, and has revealed Himself to man. Intelligent Christian scholars, moreover, have not only procured recognition among the nations for the written revelation, but have also acted as protectors of the revelation transmitted by oral tradition. For when wicked haters of God's law among *ourselves* proposed to abrogate and destroy the Talmud, there sprang up among them champions to defend it against their endeavours, &c.

That on the whole the Jewish nation has conscientiously and cheerfully accepted the Talmudic obligations of loyalty and obedience towards rulers, and righteousness and brotherly love towards fellow-citizens can be disputed only by a hostility which of set purpose ignores and distorts the truth.

We hope, by the foregoing literal extracts from the Talmudical Scriptures, to have made plain the groundlessness of the widely-held opinion of the mischievous influence exercised by the Talmud on the social conduct and intercourse of the Jews, and also to have demonstrated on the other hand the extent to which the Talmud cultivates in the hearts of its students the loftiest and most unselfish principles of righteousness, industry and loyalty on a foundation of religious consciousness—the very principles most conducive to the common welfare of a State.

We have already stated that the laudable characteristics of the Jewish nation, admitted even by its enemies, are altogether the result of Talmudic teaching and of the education and training carried out under its influence. We now desire to furnish the proof of this assertion in a few extracts from the Talmudic Scriptures, and thus, in a measure, present a complete outline of the Talmudic doctrine. We shall, however, confine ourselves to a few quotations from the rich treasury of Talmudic wisdom dealing with the formation of character, sentiment and life-principles in the individual, with marriage and domestic life, with beneficence and philanthropy, and with civic society.

III.

THE FORMATION OF MIND AND CHARACTER, DISPOSITION
AND IDEA OF LIFE.

The cultivation of mind was in high honour with the wise men of the Talmud. The science vouchsafed to them in Scripture and in tradition they did not regard as the property or privilege of any particular caste or profession, but as a national possession, to whose enjoyment and guardianship every son of Israel is called. And as this science is not concerned with any supersensual beyond, but has to do with this real actual world, with its historical development in the past, its religious, moral and social problems in the individual and collective life of the present, and its aims in the future—such being the subject with which this learning has to deal—it forms on the one hand an efficient school of things, circumstances, and relations, and is, on the other hand, so universal a nature as to readily join hands with any other science whose object is to enquire into circumstances and relations in nature and history.

That the boy may grow up in this wisdom, may one day found a house of his own and live in the practice of virtue—such are the wishes which friends and gossips express to a father on the birth of his son. And if, as stated above, the first question to be answered before the judgment seat of God concerns the uprightness of our living, the Talmud further informs us that the second will be “Hast thou not wholly given up thyself to a life of business, and hast thou reserved a certain part of each day for the mental growth of knowledge?”¹

The prayer for knowledge, prudence and understanding is the first petition of the liturgy repeated three times daily by Jews.² He who neglects the acquisition of proper knowledge almost forfeits his claim for mercy; but he who possesses right knowledge and insight, is one of the hewn stones of the sanctuary.³ He who wants right knowledge and insight is the real poor man.⁴ But our teachers value only a proper mental training—such as, to use their own expression, seeks not to drive an elephant through the eye of a needle, and they enumerate a whole series of perverse mental disciplines, which they earnestly censure.⁵

But no knowledge or science is of any value except it be to the profit of a God-fearing life. Woe to him who goes about to make a door and has no house! Yea, the fear of God is the key that opens the right way into science. But whoso has science without the fear of God, is like unto one who has the inside keys but not the outer one—how shall he enter in?⁶ But whether a man shall be God-fearing or not depends solely on himself. When a man is to be born, his angel appears before the throne of God and asks: “What shall come of this seed of man? Shall he be strong or weak, wise or simple, rich or poor?” But he does not ask whether he is to be good or bad—for the fear of God alone proceeds not from God.⁷

¹ Jore Dea, 265, 3; Sabbath, 31 a.² Berachot, 33 a.³ Ibid.⁴ Nedarim, 41 a.⁵ B. Mezia, 38 b; Kethuboth, 17 a.⁶ Sabbath, 31 a, b.⁷ Nidda, 16 b.

Give watchful heed to thy character, and consider well each step that thou takest.¹ Repent one day before thou diest, and as thou knowest not the day of thy death, think each day it may be to-morrow, and let thy whole life be a life of growing in goodness.² Keep thy garment always clean and guard thee from the smallest spot, for thou knowest not how soon thou mayest be bidden to the presence of the Creator.³ This world is as an ante-chamber to the next. Make thee ready in the ante-chamber, that thou mayest appear worthily in the audience-chamber.⁴ Make the Creator thy model. As He is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, full of love and of truth, as He clothes the naked, visits the sick, and comforts the afflicted, so be and so do thou; for it is written, "Walk after Him, walk in His ways, become like unto Him."⁵ By its nature thy soul, the image of God, is pure, seeing and unseen like God, fills its world, the body, even as God fills the great world, and, like God, is not to be found therein; it guides, sustains, and outlasts thy body, as God does His world, and is alone and single in the body, as God is in His world.⁶

The strongest hereditary note in the Jewish character is compassionateness. The Jew who is not compassionate to all that God has made is no true Jew.⁷ He who has mercy on his fellow-creatures shall receive mercy from heaven, but he who has no mercy on his fellow-creatures has no mercy to expect from above.⁸ Of the most renowned master of the Law, the author of the Mishna, the Talmud relates that a calf, which was being led to the slaughter-house, fled to him and hid its head weeping in his mantle. "Go," said he, "to that end wert thou created." Thereupon it was said above (in heaven) that as he had not shown mercy, long-enduring pains should be his portion. One day, however, that his maidservant was going to drown some young weasels which she had swept up in the house, "Let them go," said he, "for of God it is written, 'His mercy is over all His works.'" Thereupon it was said above that as he had shown mercy, mercy should be shown to him, and his pains ceased.⁹

The Talmud inculcates the duty of employing one's means to good purpose, for no man is justified in wasting his goods to no purpose, at the same time it bids us be always ready to openhandedly further all charitable and humane purposes. Whosoever only burns an unnecessary quantity of oil, it teaches, transgresses against the command given in Deut. xx. 20, "Destroy nothing," for the prohibition to fell a fruit tree is to be extended to the destruction and aimless expenditure of anything useful.¹⁰

It also commands us to lay aside and hold in readiness for charitable purposes a tenth of all yearly profits, a precept whose conscientious observance has caused active charity to be so blessedly practised in Jewish circles, that it has been deemed advisable to restrict almsgiving to at most a fifth of the yearly profits, lest any man should bring himself into a position to need assistance.¹¹ Our sages are inexhaustible in instructions as to the duty of charity,

¹ Sota, 5 b.² Sabbath, 153 a.³ Sabbath, *ibid.*⁴ Aboth, iv. 21.⁵ Sabbath, 133 b; Sota, 14 a.⁶ Talkut on Ps. ciii.⁷ Beza, 32 b.⁸ Sabbath, 151 b.⁹ B. Mezia, 85 a.¹⁰ Sabbath, 67 b.¹¹ Kethuboth, 67, 6.

entering most minutely into the details of its proper application, as well in private life as on the part of the community at large,¹ and warning most earnestly all who endeavour to evade the conscientious fulfilment of this duty.² On the other hand, they admonish us to suffer the most extreme privations rather than have to ask assistance. But to carry this restraint so far as to endanger the health either of self or family they pronounce sinful. But if a man not needing it accept assistance, he will surely need it before he quits the world, while he who is entitled to support and does not accept it, will not, in his old age, leave the world without having been himself a benefactor to the poor.³

But higher than mere almsgiving the Talmud places the prevention of poverty by gifts, loans and assistance in business,⁴ and higher than the charitable expenditure of money, the helping deed of love that flies to help, tend, comfort, raise up, support, advise and lead the poor, the sick and the suffering, and calls forth the like good deeds in others.⁵

Above all, we are to lay to heart the command to encounter the poor and unfortunate with kindly and sympathising affection, to let them feel that we pity but do not despise them, that we do not forget in them the children of God (our brethren), that it really grieves us to be unable to help them more effectually. He who breaketh his bread to the poor is blessed with the blessings contained in Isa. lviii. 8, 9. But he who at the same time comforts them with words, or, as it is there expressed, "draws out his soul to the hungry and satisfies the afflicted soul," earns for himself the eleven blessings contained in verses 10-12.⁶ If thou give it to the poor with unkindly looks, thy looks take back what thy hand gives.⁷

We are bidden to bear ourselves considerately and lovingly towards the unhappy strangers, widows and orphans, particularly towards women; we are reminded how sensitive they are to every rude act and word, how easily they are hurt, and we are referred to the Word of God: "If they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry" (Ex. xxii. 23). Though all the gates of heaven be closed, yet will a tear shed by a wounded spirit find entrance.⁸

But we are warned again and again, not merely as to our intercourse with the unfortunate, but against insulting, harming, defaming or shaming any man. Mischief done by words is worse than damage to property. The latter may be made good, the former not. Whoever openly shames his neighbour, it is said among other things, or calls him ill names, has to do sore penance for it in the life to come.⁹

The sin which is painted in the blackest colours and threatened with the heaviest responsibility before God is "*evil speaking*," which embraces every word calculated to prejudice the well-being, peace or honour of our neighbours, even though it may be founded on truth, but much more if it be slander resting on falsehood. It also includes the revealing of secrets and all gossip about our neighbours' affairs, and we are warned not even to speak good of our neighbours in any

¹ Kethuboth. ² Ibid, 68 a; B. Bathra, 9, 10. ³ Peah (end).

⁴ Sabbath, 63 a. ⁵ Suka, 49 b. ⁶ B. Bathra, 9 a. ⁷ Ib., b.

⁸ Semag Jeb., 162. ⁹ B. Mezia, 59 a, b; Maimon. Deoth vi. 10.

company where there is reason to apprehend that some one else will seize the occasion to speak evil of him.¹ Let the honour of thy neighbour be as dear to thee as thine own. He who seeks his honour in the abasement of another squanders his share of the future life.²

The Talmud is never weary of enjoining the acquisition and practice of such characteristics and sentiments as tend to make easy to us the fulfilment of our social duties, nor, on the other hand, of warning us against the acquirement of the opposite characters which go to undermine and make difficult a social life of duty fulfilled. Pride, anger, contentiousness, hastiness, dogmatism, imprudence, perverseness, obstinacy, insolency, flattery, falsehood, suspicion, ambition, greed, covetousness, avarice, envy, implacability, rancour, ingratitude, malice, sullenness, frivolity, hatred, unsociableness, &c., are *faults of character* and *vices*, against which the Talmud lifts its voice in most earnest warning. On the other hand, it as earnestly commends modesty and humility, self-possession, patience and long-suffering, placability, peaceableness, pliancy, propriety, kindness, affability, truthfulness and straightforwardness, gentleness and contentedness, self-government, open-handedness, moderation, gratitude, sympathy, cheerfulness, seriousness, reserve, love, truth, and loyalty, tranquillity, and the like.

We will note down here a few precepts from the Talmudic moral teaching, in order to exhibit its method of procedure. As idolatry, so is *haughtiness* abhorred of God, and is like unto a denial of God. God saith of the haughty man, "We cannot both live in the world." Who ever goes about with his neck erect in haughtiness thrusts the presence of God from the earth back into heaven. When God wished to reveal Himself, He passed by the high mountains and the tall trees, and descended to the modest crest of Sinai and the lowly bush. Thus God withdraws Himself from the haughty, and dwells amongst those who are modest.³

The *man of wrath* is governed by a power which ought to remain a stranger in the human breast—a power of which it is written: "Thou shalt have no strange god within thee."⁴ Be not angry and thou shalt not sin; even as thou refrainest from drunkenness, lest thou commit sin.⁵ In anger a man is exposed to all the evils that lead to "Gehinnom" (hell); he heeds not God himself, forgets what he has learnt and becomes void of understanding.⁶ Profit there is none in wrath. The wrathful man has nothing but his wrath,⁷ and his living is no life.⁸ God loves the man who gives not way to wrath nor drunkenness nor stickles for his rights.⁹ It is said of those who suffer hurt and inflict none, who listen to abuse and speak none, who do all for love of God and rejoice in what they have to bear, "They who love Him are like the sun breaking in power out of the clouds."¹⁰ Be thou slow to anger but quick to be appeased.¹¹

The man who passes over the injury done to him, shall have the wrong done by him passed over also. God will forgive the man who

¹ Arachin, 15, 16.

² Aboth, 2, 15; Maimon. vi. 3.

³ Sota, 4 b, 5 a; Berachoth, 43 a.

⁴ Sabb., 105 b.

⁵ Ber., 30.

⁶ Ned., 22 b.

⁷ Kid., 41 a.

⁸ Pessach, 113 b.

⁹ Ib.

¹⁰ Sabb., 88 b.

¹¹ Aboth, v. 14.

forgives.¹ Pick first the burrs from thine own garment before thou pickest them from thy neighbour's. Cleanse thyself before thou goest to cleanse thy neighbour.² Beware when thou sayest to thy neighbour: "Take the chip from thine eye," lest he say to thee: "Take the beam from thine own."³ Be thou yielding like the reed and not stubborn like the cedar. The storm that breaks the cedar spares the reed because it bends.⁴

Strife is like unto a stream that breaks through a dyke; if it be not stayed at once, it is not to be stayed after. Hail to him who answers not again; he escapes a hundred ills.⁵ Wouldst thou know how to recognise the moral nobility of a man? By his being the first to keep silence in strife.⁶

Esteem every man according to what is best in him.⁷ Judge no man until thou hast been in the same position.⁸ Be not indifferent to the judgment of thy fellow-men. As man desires to stand pure before God, so shall he justify his actions in the eyes of men, and not take upon himself any false show.⁹

Have thou no "evil eye" that grudges good to thy neighbour, but have a "good eye" that can look kindly on the prosperity of thy neighbour, and rejoice in his joy.¹⁰ *Envy, immoderate desire, and ambition* destroy a man.¹¹ Be not envious—the name that belongs to thee thou receivest, the place that fits thee thou holdest, and no man may take what is meant for another.¹² Be content with the portion allotted to thee—the contented man is rich,¹³ and not to every man is it given to have a seat at two tables (the material and the spiritual, the present and the future).¹⁴ Desire not thou for thyself shoes too large for thy foot.¹⁵

Not in dejection and not in meriment art thou at thy best and able to stand before the Lord—but in cheerfulness, in the serenity of mind won by faithful performance of duty.¹⁶ Sighing breaketh the half—yea, the whole strength of man.¹⁷ Jesting and frivolity pave the way for sin.¹⁸ He who is not conscious of guilt fears not. Fear brings pain after it. Man should ever remember that all that God does is for the best.¹⁹ But it is ill to comfort the mourner by saying: "What can man do against it?"²⁰ Do thy duty and torment not thyself, for into God's secrets thou canst not penetrate.²¹ Seest thou sorrow come upon thee, look to thy actions. If thou findest nothing there seek again in the divine teaching exact knowledge of thy duty. If thou there also findest no fault in thyself, thou mayest regard it as sorrow laid by the fatherly educating hand of God on man to lead him through trial and purification to ever greater perfection.²² Let man always do his best and not rely on a miracle.²³ Never shall he give up hope, however; though he feel a sharp sword at his throat, yet shall he not cease to pray to God.²⁴

The worst sin, according to the teaching of the Talmud, is what it calls "desecration of the divine name." By this is meant a mode of

¹ Rosh Hash., 17 a.² B. Bathra, 60 a.³ Ib., 15 b.⁴ Taanith, 20 a.⁵ Sanhedrin, 7 a.⁶ Kidd., 71 b.⁷ Aboth i. 6.⁸ Ib. ii. 5.⁹ Shekalim, 6 a.¹⁰ Aboth ii. 13, 14.¹¹ Ib. iv. 28.¹² Joma, 38 b.¹³ Aboth iv. 1.¹⁴ Berachoth, 5 b.¹⁵ Kiddushin, 49 a.¹⁶ Berachoth, 31 a.¹⁷ Ber., 58 b.¹⁸ Aboth iii. 17.¹⁹ Ber., 60 a.²⁰ B. Kama, 38 a.²¹ Ber., 60 a.²² Ib., 5 a.²³ Kiddushin, 39 b.²⁴ Ber., 5 a.

action which not only ignores the command of duty, but causes in others a diminution of the reverence for God, which should be sacred and exalted beyond everything and exhibited in a scrupulous fulfilment of duty—and thus the name of God loses its power.

According to the teaching of the Talmud, each man has not only to fulfil scrupulously the divine law himself, but the God-fearing conscientiousness of his brethren is also one of his obligations. By word and deed, whenever and wherever he can, he is bound to restrain his fellow-men from sin and to excite them to the discharge of duty. A heavy responsibility weighs upon him if he is able to prevent wrongdoing and does not exert himself to do it. Heavier still if by his example he has contributed to the neglect of duty to God by his neighbours.¹ The Talmud teaches: "When it is said that thou shalt love the Lord thy God, the obligation is implied on the part of winning love for the name of God."

When a man learns the written and the Oral Law, improves himself by living intercourse with the wise, and is decent in his converse with men, fair in all his dealing and upright in his walk through life—what do men say of him? Blessed be he who studies the Law, blessed be the father and teacher that taught him the Law. Woe to them who make not the Law their study! See ye not him who has learnt the Law, how fair are his paths, how upright are his dealings? Of him the Word says (Is. xlix. 3), "Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

But when a man learns the written and Oral Law, but his conversation with men is not decent, his dealings not fair, nor his walk through life upright, what do men say of him? Woe be to him who learns the Law, and to the father and teacher who teach it him, but blessed are they who learn not the Law! This man who hath learnt the Law, how hateful are his dealings and how perverse his paths! Of him the Scripture saith: "These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of His hand" (Ezek. xxxvi. 20).²

But the conception of this sin is relative. The higher a man stands in the estimation of his fellow-men, the more his actions are taken as models by other men, so much the more strict is the requirement of moral purity in his conduct, so much the more easily can he fall into this the greatest of sins, so much the more scrupulously must he avoid even the appearance of wrong and deny himself many things which are permitted in others. Thus more is required of the Jewish nation, which has been chosen to carry through the world the doctrine of God and of man's duty to God, than of the rest of mankind. Of the priests more is required than of the people, of the teachers, and all in whom familiarity with the Law, and thereby knowledge of what is right and wrong in God's sight is presupposed, more is required than of the rest of the people.³ The standing formula used in passing judgment is, "With an esteemed and considerable man the case is rather different."⁴

Again and again is the Jewish nation admonished and reminded of its peculiar obligation in intercourse with the Gentiles, the obligation,

¹ Sabbath, 55 a. ² Joma, 86 a (after En. Jacob). ³ Joma, 66 a.

⁴ B. Mezia, 33 a; Sabbath, 51 a, 142 b; Moed Katan, 11 b, &c.

namely, of practising with even more scrupulousness than ordinary the strictest uprightness towards all non-Jews. A wrong done to a Jewish compatriot is the transgression of a simple ordinance; but the same wrong committed against a non-Jew is at the same time the supreme sin of "desecration of the divine name," whose sanctification is the peculiar mission of Israel and the co-ordinate object of its dispersion among the nations.¹

THE FAMILY.

If there is any subject on which a pitiful prejudice prevails, that subject is the position of woman in Jewish antiquity. The low opinion resulting from observation of the position of woman among the other peoples of the East has been extended without further ado to that of the women of Jewish antiquity, and no weight has been allowed to the fact that Jewish conceptions and morals were formed under a very different influence—under the influence, namely, of a doctrine and a law of which no trace was to be found among the other nations. There is, in fact, no national document in which more justice is done to the worth of woman and the importance of her influence than is done in the writings of the Talmudic age. Here are a few passages to the point.

The female sex has been endowed by God with greater mental powers and therefore comes to intellectual maturity earlier than the other sex.² In national calamities, such as the Egyptian bondage, it was always the women who retained their courage and presence of mind, who comforted and sustained the men, and by their merits brought about the final deliverance.³ And in the greatest of our national transgressions—as the golden calf and the spies (Ex. xxxii. and Num. xiv.)—it was the women who would not be drawn into the iniquities of the men, who, as the phrase runs, upheld what the men were casting down.⁴ God has, therefore, promised greater things to the women than to the men—and this on account of their educational influence on their children's and husband's intellectual and moral development.⁵ The wife is the house.⁶ He is a rich man who has a virtuous wife.⁷ Who wants a wife wants all;⁸ he has neither joy nor blessing, nothing that is good, no knowledge, no comfort, and no peace.⁹ The wifeless man is incomplete.¹⁰ To him who loses his wife the world grows dark, his stride grows shorter, he misses the friend from whose approbation and applause he drew confidence in his undertakings, and his projects become feeble: he misses the counsellor who strengthened him with her intelligence.¹¹ No one feels the husband's death as the wife, or the wife's death as the husband does.¹²

The treatment and position assigned to woman in the Talmudic teaching agrees with these conceptions. Of the man who loves his wife as himself and honours her more, who trains up sons and daughters in the right way and marries them young, the Scripture says (Job v. 24) "Thou shalt know that peace is thy tabernacle."¹³

¹ Semag., pt. i. 2, 152; ii. 74.

² Nida, 46 b.

³ Sota, 11 b.

⁴ Rabbath on Num. xxvii. 1.

⁵ Ber., 17 a.

⁶ Joma, 2 a.

⁷ Sabb., 25 b.

⁸ Nedarim, 41 a.

⁹ Jebamoth, 62 b.

¹⁰ Ib., 63 a.

¹¹ Sanhedrin, 22 a.

¹² Ib., 22 b.

¹³ Jebamoth, 62 b.

Let every man guard the honour of his wife, for only through the wife dwells blessing in the house. Honour your wives and ye shall flourish. If thy wife be little, bend down to her and hear what she says. Be not rough with thy wife, but if thou art forced to oppose her, hold out thy right hand in kindness even while the left repels her. Beware of hurting thy wife, for her tears are easily wakened and are near to her wounding.¹ Let not the man be a dreaded tyrant in the house; he who makes himself feared over much may easily cause great misdoing. What thou hast to say to those of thy household, say to them quietly.² As the Talmud instructs the husband how to treat his wife, it also defines the duties of the wife to the husband.³ Love, unity, peace and friendship should, according to the nuptial benediction prescribed in the Talmud, prevail between man and wife.⁴ If man and wife are what they ought to be, in the way that they ought to be, God dwells with them.⁵

The Talmudic marriage-law displays the deepest wisdom, the clearest insight into human nature in general, into the peculiarities of the sexes, and into the manifold relationships of married and family life, as also the most circumspect and foresightful consideration of all that goes to make domestic life happy or the reverse. All these qualities appear in the rabbinical statute law. This marriage law also displays the tenderest considerations for wives and daughters. As examples we will quote just two provisions. The first declares that the woman rises with her husband, but does not descend to him.⁶ That is, whenever the legal claims of the wife as to style of maintenance and her duties have to be decided on, the customs and habits of *her* family—if they have not been renounced beforehand—furnish the standard if her family stand higher in the social scale than her husband's, otherwise the habits and customs of *his* family are the standard. And further, for instance, when a father dies leaving behind him a fortune too small to provide for both sons and daughters, it goes to the daughters, while an appeal to benevolence is made on behalf of the sons.⁷ In all questions of maintenance from charitable funds the female sex always has the advantage over the male, on the principle that the female sex requires more protection against the shame of being brought down in the world;⁸ and the dowering of unprovided maidens is one of the most approved modes of manifestation of Jewish charity.⁹

The command "Honour thy father and thy mother," receives in the Talmudic teaching the most thorough explanation and a very extensive application. We can only quote a few sentences here. This command is in no wise based on gratitude, nor does the duty of the children depend on the measure of what the parents have done for them, or cease to be binding if the parents for want of means have done little or nothing for them, or if the children are so happy as to be the benefactors of their parents. The foundation of filial reverence is not the duty of gratitude, but the command of God, who demands on behalf of parents a reverence approaching that which is due to Himself, and who counts the honour shown to parents for

¹ B. Mezia, 59 a.² Gittin, 6 b, 7 a.³ Kidd., 31 a.⁴ Kethuboth, 67 a, b.⁵ Sota, 17 a.⁶ Kethuboth, 61 a, &c.⁷ Ib., 108 b.⁸ Ib., 67 a, b.⁹ Jore Dea, 249, 15.

worship addressed to Himself.¹ In the fulfilment of this duty the most implicit obedience is required, an obedience which is bounded only by that which is due to God, in case parents should command their children to do something contrary to His commands.² And with this must go the most respectful bearing, that never contradicts nor even confirms unless called upon to do so, nor in general interrupts when the parents speak; that never allows itself an irreverent word of or to the parents; that is subject to self-control even when the parents inflict on the child the greatest wrong, injury or undeserved public shame, &c. One of the Talmudic sages instanced in the school as an example his own conduct to his mother, to whom he always lent his back as a footstool by which to step into and out of bed. And his colleagues answered: "Did she not once cast a purse of money into the water in thy presence, and didst thou not respectfully keep silence?"³

And this obligation of obedience, reverence and respect is not confined to childhood or youth; it remains binding on the man even into old age, and the death of his parents does not abolish it.⁴

On the other hand parents are admonished not to make the performance of this duty difficult to their children, and particularly not to provoke their grown-up children to sin. As a corollary to the duty to parents, respectful behaviour is required towards elder brethren, step-parents and parents-in-law.⁵

On the father is incumbent the obligation of procuring for his children by instruction and training the knowledge, capacities and abilities necessary for their religious and social life, and to the best of his ability to help them to the founding of independent houses of their own.⁶ With earnest warning words parents are admonished to make no distinction between their children, to give none any preference over the others; and are reminded of the important consequences which resulted from the slight silken border on the coat by which Joseph's father distinguished him from his brothers.⁷ And never may parents be rough with their children, but shall always hold out the right hand in kindness even when obliged to repel them with the left.⁸

THE COMMUNITY.

The individual is feeble and mortal. The community alone here below, as the Talmud puts it, is immortal and strong.⁹ Therefore the highest spiritual and moral goods are given not to the individual but to the community to possess and defend, and every man is in duty bound to connect himself with the community of his place of abode, and to assist in the fulfilment of its obligations and the performance of its tasks to the best of his ability both with purse and person.¹⁰ The foundation and maintenance of all kinds of institutions for the promotion of religion, education and charity, is one of the first obligations of every Jewish community,¹¹ and a careful, unselfish, con-

¹ Kiddushin, 30 b.

² B. Mezia, 32 a.

³ Kiddushin, 31 b.

⁴ Kiddushin, 31 b.

⁵ Kethuboth, 103 a.

⁶ Kiddushin, 29, 30; Jebamoth, 62 b; Kethuboth, 50 a.

⁷ Sabbath, 10 b.

⁸ Sanhedrin, 107 b.

⁹ Themura, 15; Jalkot Amos, 9; Sebachim, 88 b.

¹⁰ Aboth, 2, 5; B. Bathra, 7-11.

¹¹ Thosifta B. Bathra, 21 a and 8 b.

scientious and active participation in the affairs of the community counts among the most imperative of Jewish duties. All who occupy themselves with public affairs must work in pureness and unselfishness for the carrying out of God's will, and the merits of their forefathers will help them, and their own right influence will last for ever.¹

The same spirit, however, which unites the Jews of any locality into a religious community in which their united forces are made to subserve the aims of the Law, worship and charity,² leads also, in the larger communities, to the formation of smaller free associations (Chebroth), which carry out and complete the works of religion and humanity required by the larger body. This tendency to unite for religious and humanitarian purposes is in Talmudic Judaism very ancient, and has always been most assiduously cultivated.³ Thus there were, and there are still, "Talmud Torah Unions" for the religious instruction of the children of the poor or for the common study of the Torah Law, "Zedaka Unions," and "Gemiluth Chassadim Unions" for the various exigencies of charity, visitation of the sick, burial of the dead, &c. In the larger communities the various trades and professions frequently had in the old times their own societies for worship, study, and mutual assistance—societies which, after the day's work was over, offered to the working man, instead of the degrading attractions of the tavern, opportunities for worship and moral and religious instruction. These societies, founded for essentially religious and humanitarian purposes, by their self-sacrificing liberality saved the Jewish nation in the most dismal ages from the rise of a *proletariat*, and kept awake in the very lowest strata of society some interest in things intellectual and moral.

CONCLUSION.

We believe that we may confine ourselves to the extracts here given. They might easily be multiplied tenfold, but we think that to every unprejudiced reader they will suffice for the formation of a correct and impartial judgment as to the spirit and tendency of the Talmudic teaching. We believe that we are not mistaken in saying that any state or community might esteem itself fortunate if all its members allowed their individual, domestic and civic life and their relationship to their sovereign and superiors to be penetrated, shaped and guided by principles agreeing in spirit with this Talmudic teaching, and that their devotion to the doctrine and principles of the Talmud is by no means the least valuable jewel brought by the sons of Judah into every community which opens its gates to admit them. The public weal, in its widest sense, can only benefit by the Jewish members of any community continuing to allow their religious convictions, as well as their private and political life, to be sustained and shaped by the spirit of Talmudic tradition. And it really indicates no forward progress that in so many Jewish circles of the present day the bond of attachment to the Judaism handed down by the Talmud seems broken, and that familiarity with the Talmud and its doctrines

¹ Aboth, 2, 2.

² Ibid., 1.

³ Moed Katan, 27 b; Sucka, 51 b; Berachoth, 63 b; Chagiga, 9 b.

no longer occupies the position due to it, either in educational plans for the instruction of youth or in the spiritual life of the old.

True it is that the Jewish nation has not in all its members realised the ideal of moral perfection ; nor have the adherents of any creed done so. True it is that there are also unconscionable and dishonest Jews, but their want of conscience and honesty is not a consequence of their Talmudic Jewish creed, but is in direct contradiction to it ; and anyone who should from the want of conscience and dishonesty of individual Jews conclude to the character of Jewish religious dogma would go just as far astray as he who should venture to set down to the account of Christian dogma all the horrible and ghastly crimes against life, morality, and property committed by men born in Christendom and reported nearly on every page of the most recent history of times to the account of the Christian dogma.

Eminent Christian scholars who belonged to the few who really understood the Talmud, have, therefore, both in old and in recent times always replied to such calumniators by demonstrating that their indictment sprang from conscious misrepresentation or from pitiable ignorance, an ignorance on which must remain the disgrace of condemning without sufficient knowledge a work the condemnation of which condemns at the same time the life and well-being of hundreds of thousands of their fellow men. In the older times we name Reuchlin, who, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, by the warm advocacy of conviction, saved the Talmud from the annihilation with which it was threatened by the machinations of the apostate Pfeffercorn, who, as Melancthon expressed it, was speculating in the ransom money of the Jews. In recent times we may name Dr. Franz Delitzch, who demonstrated the absolute futility of the accusations of that enemy of the Talmud, Rohling, and also a criticism of the Talmud left behind him in Prague and published in Vienna by Carl Fisher, for many years censor, reviser and translator in Hebraics, in which the author supplements his own judgment as to the high utility and importance of the Talmud with extracts from the writings of a long series of eminent Christian scholars, whose judgments agree with his own. As being particularly remarkable, we would instance his demonstration that the Talmudic Scriptures were once in such high esteem in the Catholic Church that Pope Clement V. commanded them to be read to Christians.

Perchance we, also, by these quotations from the Talmudic Scriptures, may contribute to the overthrow of the still prevailing prejudice against the Talmud and the adherence of the Judaism based on Talmudic tradition, and to prepare the way for a juster estimation of the Talmud and of its upholders.

THE END.

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